

11/4/77
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington D C 20520

November 4, 1977

AL196

Dear Senator Bentsen:

The Secretary has asked me to reply to your letter of October 5, 1977 concerning the sale of eight Bell helicopters to Argentina.

As a result of your inquiry, as well as the interest expressed by the House Majority Leader, Mr. Wright, the Department of State reviewed the Bell case very carefully. We consulted the Argentine government again after the receipt of your letter and Mr. Wright's expression of interest, in an effort to reach a satisfactory conclusion to this case.

With respect to the question of assurances, we wished to obtain confirmation that the helicopters would be used for customary air force purposes. We requested such positive assurances because of our concern over the human rights situation in Argentina. We had indicated that we were prepared to be flexible as to the form and manner in which the assurances were given.

Regarding the Collins kits and armored seats referred to in your letter, the Argentine government never indicated to the Department that it would be willing to purchase the helicopters without this equipment, as the Department had stipulated.

On October 26, the Argentine Embassy informed us that it had decided against the purchase of the eight Bell helicopters at this time. We were not advised formally of the reasons for the Argentine decision. The decision probably reflected a combination of factors, including the requirement that certain equipment be deleted and Argentine concern over the future supply of spare parts in light of Congressional restrictions.

The Honorable
Lloyd Bentsen,
United States Senate.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/TPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☐ In Full☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

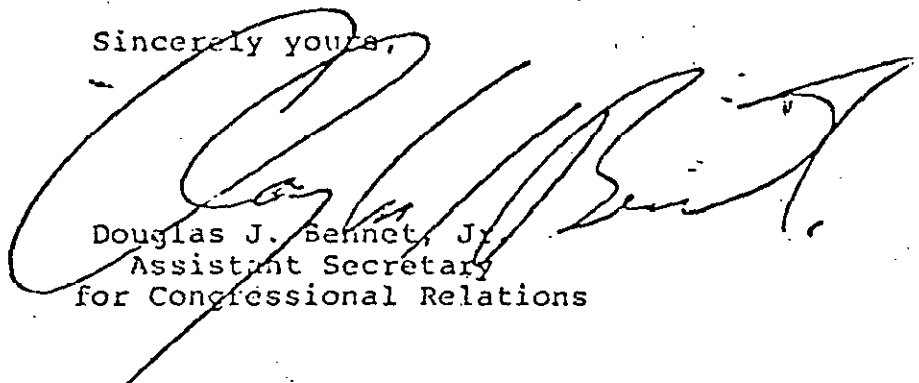
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

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Box 4855

We would have preferred a different outcome but this cannot alter our need to take a variety of factors into account in considering license applications, including the relevant statutes and the Administration's human rights policies. Section 502(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, was especially relevant in this case. The newly enacted section 620 (b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which conveyed the concern of the Congress for the situation in Argentina also was considered in framing our position.

I hope this information is helpful to you in understanding the complex issues involved in the sale of these particular helicopters to Argentina.

Sincerely yours,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, likely belonging to Douglas J. Bennett, Jr. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Douglas J. Bennett, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations